



# **The Project Gutenberg eBook of Songs of the Mexican Seas, by Joaquin Miller**

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

TITLE: Songs of the Mexican Seas

AUTHOR: Joaquin Miller

RELEASE DATE: February 4, 2012 [EBook #38766]

Most recently updated: January 8, 2021

LANGUAGE: English

CREDITS: Produced by Daniel Emerson Griffith and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <https://www.pgdp.net> (This file was produced from images generously made available by The Internet Archive)

\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SONGS OF THE  
MEXICAN SEAS \*\*\*

## **Transcriber's Note.**

A list of contents is provided below for the convenience of the reader.

[Author's Preface](#)

[The Sea of Fire](#)

[The Rhyme of the Great River: Part I](#)

[The Rhyme of the Great River: Part II](#)



SONGS  
OF  
THE MEXICAN SEAS

BY  
JOAQUIN MILLER  
AUTHOR OF "SONGS OF THE SIERRAS," "SONGS OF ITALY," ETC.

BOSTON  
ROBERTS BROTHERS  
1887

*Copyright, 1887,*  
BY ROBERTS BROTHERS.

4

**University Press:**  
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE.

TO ABBIE.

NOTE.—The lines in this little book, as in all my others, were written, or at least conceived, in the lands where the scenes are laid; so that whatever may be said of the imperfections of my work, I at least have the correct atmosphere and color. I have now and then sent forth from Mexico, and from remoter shores of the Gulf, fragments of these thoughts as they rounded into form, and some of them have been used at a Dartmouth College Commencement, and elsewhere; but as a whole the book is new.

From the heart of the Sierra, where I once more hear the awful heart-throbs of Nature, I now intrust the first reception of these lessons entirely to my own country. And may I not ask in return, now at the last, when the shadows begin to grow long, something of that consideration which, thus far, has been accorded almost entirely by strangers?

JOAQUIN MILLER.

MOUNT SHASTA, CALIFORNIA,  
*A.D. 1887.*



# SONGS OF THE MEXICAN SEAS.

## THE SEA OF FIRE.

*I*N that far land, farther than Yucatan,  
 Hondurian height, or Mahogany steep,  
 Where the great sea, hollowed by the hand of man  
 Hears deep come calling across to deep;  
 Where the great seas follow in the grooves of men  
 Down under the bastions of Darien:

*In that land so far that you wonder whether  
 If God would know it should you fall down dead;  
 In that land so far through the wilds and weather  
 That the lost sun sinks like a warrior sped,—  
 Where the sea and the sky seem closing together,  
 Seem closing together as a book that is read:*

*In that nude warm world, where the unnamed rivers  
 Roll restless in cradles of bright buried gold;  
 Where white flashing mountains flow rivers of silver  
 As a rock of the desert flowed fountains of old;  
 By a dark wooded river that calls to the dawn,  
 And calls all day with his dolorous swan:*

10

*In that land of the wonderful sun and weather,  
 With green under foot and with gold over head,  
 Where the spent sun flames, and you wonder whether  
 'Tis an isle of fire in his foamy bed:  
 Where the oceans of earth shall be welded together  
 By the great French master in his forge flame red,—*

*Lo! the half-finished world! Yon footfall retreating,—  
 It might be the Maker disturbed at his task.  
 But the footfall of God, or the far pheasant beating,  
 It is one and the same, whatever the mask  
 It may wear unto man. The woods keep repeating  
 The old sacred sermons, whatever you ask.*

*The brown-muzzled cattle come stealthy to drink,  
 The wild forest cattle, with high horns as trim  
 As the elk at their side: their sleek necks are slim  
 And alert like the deer. They come, then they shrink  
 As afraid of their fellows, of shadow-beasts seen  
 In the deeps of the dark-wooded waters of green.*

11

*It is man in his garden, scarce wakened as yet  
 From the sleep that fell on him when woman was made.  
 The new-finished garden is plastic and wet  
 From the hand that has fashioned its unpeopled shade;  
 And the wonder still looks from the fair woman's eyes  
 As she shines through the wood like the light from the skies.*

*And a ship now and then from some far Ophir's shore  
 Draws in from the sea. It lies close to the bank;  
 Then a dull, muffled sound of the slow-shuffled plank*

*As they load the black ship; but you hear nothing more,  
And the dark dewy vines, and the tall sombre wood  
Like twilight droop over the deep sweeping flood.*

*The black masts are tangled with branches that cross,  
The rich, fragrant gums fall from branches to deck,  
The thin ropes are swinging with streamers of moss  
That mantle all things like the shreds of a wreck;  
The long mosses swing, there is never a breath:  
The river rolls still as the river of death.*

12

## I.

13

**I**N the beginning,—ay, before  
The six-days' labors were well o'er;  
Yea, while the world lay incomplete,  
Ere God had opened quite the door  
Of this strange land for strong men's feet,—  
There lay against that westmost sea  
One weird-wild land of mystery.

A far white wall, like fallen moon,  
Girt out the world. The forest lay  
So deep you scarcely saw the day,  
Save in the high-held middle noon:  
It lay a land of sleep and dreams,  
And clouds drew through like shoreless streams  
That stretch to where no man may say.

Men reached it only from the sea,  
By black-built ships, that seemed to creep  
Along the shore suspiciously,  
Like unnamed monsters of the deep.  
It was the weirdest land, I ween,  
That mortal eye has ever seen:

14

A dim, dark land of bird and beast,  
Black shaggy beasts with cloven claw,—  
A land that scarce knew prayer or priest,  
Or law of man, or Nature's law;  
Where no fixed line drew sharp dispute  
'Twixt savage man and silent brute.

## II.

It hath a history most fit  
For cunning hand to fashion on;  
No chronicler hath mentioned it;  
No buccaneer set foot upon.  
'Tis of an outlawed Spanish Don,—  
A cruel man, with pirate's gold  
That loaded down his deep ship's hold.

A deep ship's hold of plundered gold!  
The golden cruise, the golden cross,  
From many a church of Mexico,  
From Panama's mad overthrow,  
From many a ransomed city's loss,  
From many a follower stanch and bold,  
And many a foeman stark and cold.

15

He found this wild, lost land. He drew  
His ship to shore. His ruthless crew,  
Like Romulus, laid lawless hand  
On meek brown maidens of the land,  
And in their bloody forays bore  
Red firebrands along the shore.

### III.

The red men rose at night. They came,  
A firm, unflinching wall of flame;  
They swept, as sweeps some fateful sea  
O'er land of sand and level shore  
That howls in far, fierce agony.  
The red men swept that deep, dark shore  
As threshers sweep a threshing-floor.

And yet beside the slain Don's door  
They left his daughter, as they fled:  
They spared her life, because she bore  
Their Chieftain's blood and name. The red  
And blood-stained hidden hoards of gold  
They hollowed from the stout ship's hold,  
And bore in many a slim canoe—  
To where? The good priest only knew.

16

### IV.

The course of life is like the sea:  
Men come and go; tides rise and fall;  
And that is all of history.  
The tide flows in, flows out to-day,—  
And that is all that man may say;  
Man is, man was,—and that is all.

Revenge at last came like a tide,—  
'T was sweeping, deep, and terrible;  
The Christian found the land, and came  
To take possession in Christ's name.  
For every white man that had died  
I think a thousand red men fell,—  
A Christian custom; and the land  
Lay lifeless as some burned-out brand.

### V.

Ere while the slain Don's daughter grew  
A glorious thing, a flower of spring,  
A lithe slim reed, a sun-loved weed,  
A something more than mortal knew;  
A mystery of grace and face,—  
A silent mystery that stood  
An empress in that sea-set wood,  
Supreme, imperial in her place.

It might have been men's lust for gold,—  
For all men knew that lawless crew  
Left hoards of gold in that ship's hold,  
That drew ships hence, and silent drew

17

Strange Jasons to that steep wood shore,  
As if to seek that hidden store,—  
I never either cared or knew.

I say it might have been this gold  
That ever drew and strangely drew  
Strong men of land, strange men of sea,  
To seek this shore of mystery  
With all its wondrous tales untold:  
The gold or her, which of the two?  
It matters not; I never knew.

But this I know, that as for me,  
Between that face and the hard fate  
That kept me ever from my own,  
As some wronged monarch from his throne,  
God's heaped-up gold of land or sea  
Had never weighed one feather's weight.

Her home was on the wooded height,—  
A woody home, a priest at prayer,  
A perfume in the fervid air,  
And angels watching her at night.  
I can but think upon the skies  
That bound that other Paradise.

## VI.

Below a star-built arch, as grand  
As ever bended heaven spanned;  
Tall trees like mighty columns grew—  
They loomed as if to pierce the blue,  
They reached as reaching heaven through.

The shadowed stream rolled far below,  
Where men moved noiseless to and fro  
As in some vast cathedral, when  
The calm of prayer comes to men,  
With benedictions, bending low.

Lo! wooded sea-banks, wild and steep!  
A trackless wood; a snowy cone  
That lifted from this wood alone!  
This wild wide river, dark and deep!  
A ship against the shore asleep!

## VII.

An Indian woman crept, a crone,  
Hard by about the land alone,  
The relic of her perished race.  
She wore rich, rudely-fashioned bands  
Of gold above her bony hands:  
She hissed hot curses on the place!

## VIII.

Go seek the red man's last retreat!  
A lonesome land, the haunted lands!  
Red mouths of beasts, red men's red hands:

Red prophet-priest, in mute defeat!

His boundaries in blood are writ!  
His land is ghostland! That is his,  
Whatever man may claim of this;  
Beware how you shall enter it!  
He stands God's guardian of ghostlands;  
Ay, this same wrapped half-prophet stands  
All nude and voiceless, nearer to  
The awful God than I or you.

## IX.

This bronzed child, by that river's brink,  
Stood fair to see as you can think,  
As tall as tall reeds at her feet,  
As fresh as flowers in her hair;  
As sweet as flowers over-sweet,  
As fair as vision more than fair!

How beautiful she was! How wild!  
How pure as water-plant, this child,—  
This one wild child of Nature here  
Grown tall in shadows.

And how near  
To God, where no man stood between  
Her eyes and scenes no man hath seen,—  
This maiden that so mutely stood,  
The one lone woman of that wood.

Stop still, my friend, and do not stir,  
Shut close your page and think of her.  
The birds sang sweeter for her face;  
Her lifted eyes were like a grace  
To seamen of that solitude,  
However rough, however rude.

The rippled rivers of her hair,  
That ran in wondrous waves, somehow  
Flowed down divided by her brow,—  
Half mantled her within its care,  
And flooded all, or bronze or snow,  
In its uncommon fold and flow.

A perfume and an incense lay  
Before her, as an incense sweet  
Before blithe mowers of sweet May  
In early morn. Her certain feet  
Embarked on no uncertain way.

Come, think how perfect before men,  
How sweet as sweet magnolia bloom  
Embalmed in dews of morning, when  
Rich sunlight leaps from midnight gloom  
Resolved to kiss, and swift to kiss  
Ere yet morn wakens man to bliss.

## X.

The days swept on. Her perfect year

Was with her now. The sweet perfume  
Of womanhood in holy bloom,  
As when red harvest blooms appear,  
Possessed her now. The priest did pray  
That saints alone should pass that way.

A red bird built beneath her roof,  
Brown squirrels crossed her cabin sill,  
And welcome came or went at will.  
A hermit spider wove his web,  
And up against the roof would spin  
His net to catch mosquitoes in.

The silly elk, the spotted fawn,  
And all dumb beasts that came to drink,  
That stealthy stole upon the brink  
In that dim while that lies between  
The coming night and going dawn,  
On seeing her familiar face  
Would fearless stop and stand in place.

She was so kind, the beasts of night  
Gave her the road as if her right;  
The panther crouching overhead  
In sheen of moss would hear her tread  
And bend his eyes, but never stir  
Lest he by chance might frighten her.

Yet in her splendid strength, her eyes,  
There lay the lightning of the skies;  
The love-hate of the lioness,  
To kill the instant, or caress:  
A pent-up soul that sometimes grew  
Impatient; why, she hardly knew.

At last she sighed, uprose, and threw  
Her strong arms out as if to hand  
Her love, sun-born and all complete  
At birth, to some brave lover's feet  
On some far, fair, and unseen land,  
As knowing now not what to do!

## **XI.**

How beautiful she was! Why, she  
Was inspiration! She was born  
To walk God's summer hills at morn,  
Nor waste her by this wood-dark sea.  
What wonder, then, her soul's white wings  
Beat at its bars, like living things!

Once more she sighed! She wandered through  
The sea-bound wood, then stopped and drew  
Her hand above her face, and swept  
The lonesome sea, and all day kept  
Her face to sea, as if she knew  
Some day, some near or distant day,  
Her destiny should come that way.

## **XII.**

How proud she was! How darkly fair!  
How full of faith, of love, of strength!  
Her calm, proud eyes! Her great hair's length,—  
Her long, strong, tumbled, careless hair,  
Half curled and knotted anywhere,  
From brow to breast, from cheek to chin,  
For love to trip and tangle in!

### XIII.

At last a tall strange sail was seen:  
It came so slow, so wearily,  
Came creeping cautious up the sea,  
As if it crept from out between  
The half-closed sea and sky that lay  
Tight wedged together, far away.

She watched it, wooed it. She did pray  
It might not pass her by, but bring  
Some love, some hate, some anything,  
To break the awful loneliness  
That like a nightly nightmare lay  
Upon her proud and pent-up soul  
Until it barely brooked control.

### XIV.

The ship crept silent up the sea,  
And came—  
    You cannot understand  
How fair she was, how sudden she  
Had sprung, full-grown, to womanhood:  
How gracious, yet how proud and grand;  
How glorified, yet fresh and free,  
How human, yet how more than good.

### XV.

The ship stole slowly, slowly on;—  
Should you in Californian field  
In ample flower-time behold  
The soft south rose lift like a shield  
Against the sudden sun at dawn,  
A double handful of heaped gold,  
Why you, perhaps, might understand  
How splendid and how queenly she  
Uprose beside that wood-set sea.

The storm-worn ship scarce seemed to creep  
From wave to wave. It scarce could keep—  
How still this fair girl stood, how fair!  
How proud her presence as she stood  
Between that vast sea and west wood!  
How large and liberal her soul,  
How confident, how purely chare,  
How trusting; how untried the whole  
Great heart, grand faith, that blossomed there!

## XVI.

Ay, she was as Madonna to  
The tawny, lawless, faithful few  
Who touched her hand and knew her soul:  
She drew them, drew them as the pole  
Points all things to itself.

She drew

Men upward as a moon of spring,  
High wheeling, vast and bosom-full,  
Half clad in clouds and white as wool,  
Draws all the strong seas following.

Yet still she moved as sad, as lone  
As that same moon that leans above,  
And seems to search high heaven through  
For some strong, all-sufficient love,  
For one brave love to be her own,  
To lean upon, to love, to woo,  
To lord her high white world, to yield  
His clashing sword against her shield.

Oh, I once knew a sad, white dove  
That died for such sufficient love,  
Such high-born soul with wings to soar:  
That stood up equal in its place,  
That looked love level in the face,  
Nor wearied love with leaning o'er  
To lift love level where she trod  
In sad delight the hills of God.

28

## XVII.

How slow before the sleeping breeze,  
That stranger ship from under seas!  
How like to Dido by her sea,  
When reaching arms imploringly,—  
Her large, round, rich, impassioned arms,  
Tossed forth from all her storied charms,—  
This one lone maiden leaning stood  
Above that sea, beside the wood!

The ship crept strangely up the seas;  
Her shrouds seemed shreds, her masts seemed trees,—  
Strange tattered trees of toughest bough  
That knew no cease of storm till now.  
The maiden pitied her; she prayed  
Her crew might come, nor feel afraid;  
She prayed the winds might come,—they came,  
As birds that answer to a name.

29

The maiden held her blowing hair  
That bound her beauteous self about;  
The sea-winds housed within her hair:  
She let it go, it blew in rout  
About her bosom full and bare.  
Her round, full arms were free as air,  
Her high hands clasped, as clasped in prayer.

## XVIII.



The breeze grew bold, the battered ship  
Began to flap her weary wings;  
The tall, torn masts began to dip  
And walk the wave like living things.  
She rounded in, she struck the stream,  
She moved like some majestic dream.

The captain kept her deck. He stood  
A Hercules among his men;  
And now he watched the sea, and then  
He peered as if to pierce the wood.  
He now looked back, as if pursued,  
Now swept the sea with glass, as though  
He fled or feared some hidden foe.

Swift sailing up the river's mouth,  
Swift tacking north, swift tacking south,  
He touched the overhanging wood;  
He tacked his ship; his tall black mast  
Touched tree-top mosses as he passed;  
He touched the steep shore where she stood.

### **XIX.**

Her hands still clasped as if in prayer,  
Sweet prayer set to silentness;  
Her sun-browned throat uplifted, bare  
And beautiful.

Her eager face  
Illumed with love and tenderness,  
And all her presence gave such grace,  
Dark shadowed in her cloud of hair,  
That she seemed more than mortal fair.

### **XX.**

He saw. He could not speak. No more  
With lifted glass he sought the sea;  
No more he watched the wild new shore.  
Now foes might come, now friends might flee;  
He could not speak, he would not stir,—  
He saw but her, he feared but her.

The black ship ground against the shore,  
She ground against the bank as one  
With long and weary journeys done,  
That would not rise to journey more.

Yet still this Jason silent stood  
And gazed against that sun-lit wood,  
As one whose soul is anywhere.

All seemed so fair, so wondrous fair!  
At last aroused, he stepped to land  
Like some Columbus. They laid hand  
On lands and fruits, and rested there.

### **XXI.**

He found all fairer than fair morn

In sylvan land, where waters run  
With downward leap against the sun,  
And full-grown sudden May is born.  
He found her taller than tall corn  
Tiptoe in tassel; found her sweet  
As vale where bees of Hybla meet.

An unblown rose, an unread book;  
A wonder in her wondrous eyes;  
A large, religious, steadfast look  
Of faith, of trust,—the look of one  
New welcomed in her Paradise.

He read this book,—read on and on  
From titlepage to colophon:  
As in cool woods, some summer day,  
You find delight in some sweet lay,  
And so entranced read on and on  
From titlepage to colophon.

## XXII.

And who was he that rested there,—  
This Hercules, so huge, so rare,  
This giant of a grander day,  
This Theseus of a nobler Greece,  
This Jason of the golden fleece?  
And who was he? And who were they  
That came to seek the hidden gold  
Long hallowed from the pirate's hold?  
I do not know. You need not care.

. . . . .  
They loved, this maiden and this man,  
And that is all I surely know,—  
The rest is as the winds that blow.  
He bowed as brave men bow to fate,  
Yet proud and resolute and bold;  
She, coy at first, and mute and cold,  
Held back and seemed to hesitate,—  
Half frightened at this love that ran  
Hard gallop till her hot heart beat  
Like sounding of swift courser's feet.

## XXIII.

Two strong streams of a land must run  
Together surely as the sun  
Succeeds the moon. Who shall gainsay  
The fates that reign, that wisely reign?  
Love is, love was, shall be again.  
Like death, inevitable it is;  
Perchance, like death, the dawn of bliss.  
Let us, then, love the perfect day,  
The twelve o'clock of life, and stop  
The two hands pointing to the top,  
And hold them tightly while we may.

## XXIV.

How piteous strange is love! The walks  
By wooded ways; the silent talks  
Beneath the broad and fragrant bough.  
The dark deep wood, the dense black dell,  
Where scarce a single gold beam fell  
From out the sun.

They rested now  
On mossy trunk. They wandered then  
Where never fell the feet of men.

Then longer walks, then deeper woods,  
Then sweeter talks, sufficient sweet,  
In denser, deeper solitudes,—  
Dear careless ways for careless feet;  
Sweet talks of paradise for two,  
And only two, to watch or woo.

She rarely spake. All seemed a dream  
She would not waken from. She lay  
All night but waiting for the day,  
When she might see his face, and deem  
This man, with all his perils passed,  
Had found the Lotus-land at last.

## XXV.

The year waxed fervid, and the sun  
Fell central down. The forest lay  
A-quiver in the heat. The sea  
Below the steep bank seemed to run  
A molten sea of gold.

Away

Against the gray and rock-built isles  
That broke the molten watery miles  
Where lonesome sea-cows called all day,  
The sudden sun smote angrily.

Therefore the need of deeper deeps,  
Of denser shade for man and maid,  
Of higher heights, of cooler steeps,  
Where all day long the sea-wind stayed.

They sought the rock-reared steep. The breeze  
Swept twenty thousand miles of seas;  
Had twenty thousand things to say  
Of love, of lovers of Cathay,  
To lovers 'mid these high-held trees.

## XXVI.

To left, to right, below the height,  
Below the wood by wave and stream,  
Plumed pampas grasses grew to gleam  
And bend their lordly plumes, and run  
And shake, as if in very fright  
Before sharp lances of the sun.

They saw the tide-bound battered ship  
Creep close below against the bank;  
They saw it cringe and shrink; it shrank

As shrinks some huge black beast with fear  
When some uncommon dread is near.  
They heard the melting resin drip,  
As drip the last brave blood-drops when  
Life's battle waxes hot with men.

## XXVII.

Yet what to her were burning seas,  
Or what to him was forest flame?  
They loved; they loved the glorious trees,  
The gleaming tides, or rise or fall;  
They loved the lispings winds that came  
From sea-lost spice-set isles unknown,  
With breath not warmer than their own:  
They loved, they loved,—and that was all.

## XXVIII.

Full noon! Below the ancient moss  
With mighty boughs high clanged across,  
The man with sweet words, over-sweet,  
Fell pleading, plaintive, at her feet.

He spake of love, of boundless love,—  
Of love that knew no other land,  
Or face, or place, or anything;  
Of love that like the wearied dove  
Could light nowhere, but kept the wing  
Till she alone put forth her hand,  
And so received it in her ark  
From seas that shake against the dark!

He clasped her hands, climbed past her knees,  
Forgot her hands and kissed her hair,—  
The while her two hands clasped in prayer,  
And fair face lifted to the trees.

Her proud breast heaved, her pure proud breast  
Rose like the waves in their unrest  
When counter storms possess the seas.  
Her mouth, her arched, uplifted mouth,  
Her ardent mouth that thirsted so,—  
No glowing love-song of the South  
Can say; no man can say or know  
The glory there, and so live on  
Content without that glory gone!

Her face still lifted up. And she  
Disdained the cup of passion he  
Hard pressed her panting lips to touch.  
She dashed it by despised, and she  
Caught fast her breath. She trembled much,  
And sudden rose full height, and stood  
An empress in high womanhood:  
She stood a tower, tall as when  
Proud Roman mothers suckled men  
Of old-time truth and taught them such.

## XXIX.

Her soul surged vast as space is. She  
Was trembling as a courser when  
His thin flank quivers, and his feet  
Touch velvet on the turf, and he  
Is all afoam, alert, and fleet  
As sunlight glancing on the sea,  
And full of triumph before men.

At last she bended some her face,  
Half leaned, then put him back a pace,  
And met his eyes.

Calm, silently

Her eyes looked deep into his eyes,—  
As maidens down some mossy well  
Do peer in hope by chance to tell  
By image there what future lies  
Before them, and what face shall be  
The pole-star of their destiny.

Pure Nature's lover! Loving him  
With love that made all pathways dim  
And difficult where he was not,—  
Then marvel not at form forgot.  
And who shall chide? Doth priest know aught  
Of sign, or holy unction brought  
From over seas, that ever can  
Make man love maid or maid love man  
One whit the more, one bit the less,  
For all his mummeries to bless?  
Yea, all his blessing or his ban?

The winds breathed warm as Araby:  
She leaned upon his breast, she lay  
A wide-winged swan with folded wing.  
He drowned his hot face in her hair,  
He heard her great heart rise and sing;  
He felt her bosom swell.

The air

Swooned sweet with perfume of her form.  
Her breast was warm, her breath was warm,  
And warm her warm and perfumed mouth  
As summer journeys through the South.

## XXX.

The argent sea surged steep below,  
Surged languid in a tropic glow;  
And two great hearts kept surging so!

The fervid kiss of heaven lay  
Precipitate on wood and sea.  
Two great souls glowed with ecstasy,  
The sea glowed scarce as warm as they.

## XXXI.

'T was love's low amber afternoon.  
Two far-off pheasants thrummed a tune,

A cricket clanged a restful air.  
The dreamful billows beat a rune  
Like heart regrets.

                                Around her head  
There shone a halo. Men have said  
'T was from a dash of Titian  
That flooded all her storm of hair  
In gold and glory. But they knew,  
Yea, all men know there ever grew  
A halo round about her head  
Like sunlight scarcely vanishèd.

42

### **XXXII.**

How still she was! She only knew  
His love. She saw no life beyond.  
She loved with love that only lives  
Outside itself and selfishness,—  
A love that glows in its excess;  
A love that melts pure gold, and gives  
Thenceforth to all who come to woo  
No coins but this face stamped thereon,—  
Ay, this one image stamped upon  
Its face, with some dim date long gone.

### **XXXIII.**

They kept the headland high; the ship  
Below began to chafe her chain,  
To groan as some great beast in pain;  
While white fear leapt from lip to lip:  
"The woods are fire! the woods are flame!  
Come down and save us, in God's name!"

43

He heard! he did not speak or stir,—  
He thought of her, of only her.  
While flames behind, before them lay  
To hold the stoutest heart at bay!

Strange sounds were heard far up the flood,—  
Strange, savage sounds that chilled the blood!  
Then sudden from the dense dark wood  
Above, about them where they stood  
A thousand beasts came peering out;  
And now was thrust a long black snout,  
And now a tusky mouth. It was  
A sight to make the stoutest pause.

"Cut loose the ship!" the black mate cried;  
"Cut loose the ship!" the crew replied.  
They drove into the sea. It lay  
As light as ever middle day.

The while their half-blind bitch, that sat  
All slobber-mouthed, and monkish cowed  
With great, broad, floppy, leathern ears,  
Amid the men, rose up and howled,  
And doleful howled her plaintive fears,  
While all looked mute aghast thereat.  
It was the grimmest eve, I think,

44

That ever hung on Hades' brink.

Great broad-winged bats possessed the air,  
Bats whirling blindly everywhere;  
It was such troubled twilight eve  
As never mortal would believe.

#### **XXXIV.**

Some say the crazed hag lit the wood  
In circle where the lovers stood;  
Some say the gray priest feared the crew  
Might find at last the hoard of gold  
Long hidden from the black ship's hold,—  
I doubt me if men ever knew.  
But such mad, howling, flame-lit shore  
No mortal ever saw before.

Huge beasts above that shining sea,  
Wild, hideous beasts with shaggy hair,  
With red mouths lifting in the air,  
They piteous howled, and plaintively,—  
The wildest sounds, the weirdest sight  
That ever shook the walls of night.

How lorn they howled, with lifted head,  
To dim and distant isles that lay  
Wedged tight along a line of red,  
Caught in the closing gates of day  
'Twixt sky and sea and far away,—  
It was the saddest sound to hear  
That ever struck on human ear.

They doleful called; and answered they  
The plaintive sea-cows far away,—  
The great sea-cows that called from isles,  
Away across wide watery miles,  
With dripping mouths and lolling tongue,  
As if they called for captured young,—

The huge sea-cows that called the whales  
Their great wide mouths were mouthing moss;  
And still they doleful called across  
From isles beyond the watery miles.  
No sound can half so doleful be  
As sea-cows calling from the sea.

#### **XXXV.**

The drowned sun sank and died. He lay  
In seas of blood. He sinking drew  
The gates of sunset sudden to,  
Where shattered day in fragments lay,  
And night came, moving in mad flame:  
The night came, lighted as he came,  
As lighted by high summer sun  
Descending through the burning blue.  
It was a gold and amber hue,  
And all hues blended into one.  
The night spilled splendor where she came,

And filled the yellow world with flame.

The moon came on, came leaning low  
Along the far sea-isles aglow;  
She fell along that amber flood  
A silver flame in seas of blood.  
It was the strangest moon, ah me!  
That ever settled on God's sea.

47

### XXXVI.

Slim snakes slid down from fern and grass,  
From wood, from fen, from anywhere;  
You could not step, you would not pass,  
And you would hesitate to stir,  
Lest in some sudden, hurried tread  
Your foot struck some unbruised head:

They slid in streams into the stream,—  
It seemed like some infernal dream;  
They curved, and graceful curved across,  
Like graceful, waving sea-green moss,—  
There is no art of man can make  
A ripple like a rippling snake!

### XXXVII.

Abandoned, lorn, the lovers stood,  
Abandoned there, death in the air!  
That beetling steep, that blazing wood,—  
Red flame! and red flame everywhere!  
Yet was he born to strive, to bear  
The front of battle. He would die  
In noble effort, and defy  
The grizzled visage of despair.

48

He threw his two strong arms full length  
As if to surely test their strength;  
Then tore his vestments, textile things  
That could but tempt the demon wings  
Of flame that girt them round about,  
Then threw his garments to the air  
As one that laughed at death, at doubt,  
And like a god stood grand and bare.

She did not hesitate; she knew  
The need of action; swift she threw  
Her burning vestments by, and bound  
Her wondrous wealth of hair that fell  
An all-concealing cloud around  
Her glorious presence, as he came  
To seize and bear her through the flame,—  
An Orpheus out of burning hell!

He leaned above her, wound his arm  
About her splendor, while the noon  
Of flood-tide, manhood, flushed his face,  
And high flames leapt the high headland!—  
They stood as twin-hewn statues stand,  
High lifted in some storied place.

49



He clasped her close, he spoke of death,—  
Of death and love in the same breath.  
He clasped her close; her bosom lay  
Like ship safe anchored in some bay.

### XXXVIII.

The flames! They could not stand or stay;  
Before the beetling steep, the sea!  
But at his feet a narrow way,  
A short steep path, pitched suddenly  
Safe open to the river's beach,  
Where lay a small white isle in reach,—  
A small, white, rippled isle of sand  
Where yet the two might safely land.

And there, through smoke and flame, behold  
The priest stood safe, yet all appalled!  
He reached the cross; he cried, he called;  
He waved his high-held cross of gold.  
He called and called, he bade them fly  
Through flames to him, nor bide and die!

50

Her lover saw; he saw, and knew  
His giant strength would bear her through.  
And yet he would not start or stir.  
He clasped her close as death can hold,  
Or dying miser clasp his gold,—  
His hold became a part of her.

He would not give her up! He would  
Not bear her waveward though he could!  
That height was heaven; the wave was hell.  
He clasped her close,—what else had done  
The manliest man beneath the sun?  
Was it not well? was it not well?

O man, be glad! be grandly glad,  
And kinglike walk thy ways of death!  
For more than years of bliss you had  
That one brief time you breathed her breath.  
Yea, more than years upon a throne  
That one brief time you held her fast,  
Soul surged to soul, vehement, vast,—  
True breast to breast, and all your own.

Live me one day, one narrow night,  
One second of supreme delight  
Like that, and I will blow like chaff  
The hollow years aside, and laugh  
A loud triumphant laugh, and I,  
King-like and crowned, will gladly die.

51

Oh, but to wrap my love with flame!  
With flame within, with flame without!  
Oh, but to die like this, nor doubt—  
To die and know her still the same!  
To know that down the ghostly shore  
Snow-white she waits me evermore!

### XXXIX.

He poised her, held her high in air,—  
His great strong limbs, his great arm's length!—  
Then turned his knotted shoulders bare  
As birth-time in his splendid strength,  
And strode, strode with a lordly stride  
To where the high and wood-hung edge  
Looked down, far down upon the molten tide.  
The flames leapt with him to the ledge,  
The flames leapt leering at his side.

### XL.

He leaned above the ledge. Below  
He saw the black ship idly cruise,—  
A midge below, a mile below.  
His limbs were knotted as the thews  
Of Hercules in his death-throe.

The flame! the flame! the envious flame!  
She wound her arms, she wound her hair  
About his tall form, grand and bare,  
To stay the fierce flame where it came.

The black ship, like some moonlit wreck,  
Below along the burning sea  
Crept on and on all silently,  
With silent pygmies on her deck.

That midge-like ship far, far below;  
That mirage lifting from the hill!  
His flame-lit form began to grow,—  
To grow and grow more grandly still.  
The ship so small, that form so tall,  
It grew to tower over all.

A tall Colossus, bronze and gold,  
As if that flame-lit form were he  
Who once bestrode the Rhodian sea,  
And ruled the watery world of old:  
As if the lost Colossus stood  
Above that burning sea of wood.

And she, that shapely form upheld,  
Held high, as if to touch the sky,  
What airy shape, how shapely high,—  
A goddess of the seas of eld!

Her hand upheld, her high right hand,  
As if she would forget the land;  
As if to gather stars, and heap  
The stars like torches there to light  
Her Hero's path across the deep  
To some far isle that fearful night.

It was as if Colossus came,  
Came proudly reaching from the flame  
Above the sea in sheen of gold,  
His sea-bride leaping from his hold;  
The lost Colossus, and his bride

In bronze perfection at his side:  
As if the lost Colossus came  
Companioned from the past, his bride  
With torch all faithful at his side:

54

With star-tipped torch that reached and rolled  
Through cloud-built corridors of gold:  
His bride, austere and stern and grand,—  
Bartholdi's goddess by the sea,  
Far lifting, lighting Liberty  
From prison seas to Freedom's land.

### **XLI.**

The flame! the envious flame, it leapt  
Enraged to see such majesty,  
Such scorn of death; such kingly scorn.  
Then like some lightning-riven tree  
They sank down in that flame—and slept  
And all was hushed above that steep  
So still, that they might sleep and sleep;  
As still as when a day is born.

At last! from out the embers leapt  
Two shafts of light above the night,—  
Two wings of flame that lifting swept  
In steady, calm, and upward flight;  
Two wings of flame against the white  
Far-lifting, tranquil, snowy cone;  
Two wings of love, two wings of light,  
Far, far above that troubled night,  
As mounting, mounting to God's throne.

55

### **XLII.**

And all night long that upward light  
Lit up the sea-cow's bed below:  
The far sea-cows still calling so  
It seemed as they must call all night.  
All night! there was no night. Nay, nay,  
There was no night. The night that lay  
Between that awful eve and day,—  
That nameless night was burned away.

## PART I.

*RHYME on, rhyme on in reedy flow,  
O river, rhymer ever sweet!  
The story of thy land is meet,  
The stars stand listening to know.*

*Rhyme on, O river of the earth!  
Gray father of the dreadful seas,  
Rhyme on! the world upon its knees  
Shall yet invoke thy wealth and worth.*

*Rhyme on, the reed is at thy mouth,  
O kingly minstrel, mighty stream!  
Thy Crescent City, like a dream,  
Hangs in the heaven of my South.*

*Rhyme on, rhyme on! these broken strings  
Sing sweetest in this warm south wind;  
I sit thy willow banks and bind  
A broken harp that fitful sings.*

60

## I.

61

*AND where is my city, sweet blossom-sown town?  
And what is her glory, and what has she done?  
By the Mexican seas in the path of the sun  
Sit you down: in the crescent of seas sit you down.*

*Ay, glory enough by my Mexican seas!  
Ay, story enough in that battle-torn town,  
Hidden down in the crescent of seas, hidden down  
'Mid mantle and sheen of magnolia-strown trees.*

*But mine is the story of souls; of a soul  
That bartered God's limitless kingdom for gold,—  
Sold stars and all space for a thing he could hold  
In his palm for a day, ere he hid with the mole.*

*O father of waters! O river so vast!  
So deep, so strong, and so wondrous wild,—  
He embraces the land as he rushes past,  
Like a savage father embracing his child.*

62

*His sea-land is true and so valiantly true,  
His leaf-land is fair and so marvellous fair,  
His palm-land is filled with a perfumed air  
Of magnolia blooms to its dome of blue.*

*His rose-land has arbors of moss-swept oak,—  
Gray, Druid old oaks; and the moss that sways  
And swings in the wind is the battle-smoke  
Of duellists, dead in her storied days.*

*His love-land has churches and bells and chimes;  
His love-land has altars and orange flowers;  
And that is the reason for all these rhymes,—  
These bells, they are ringing through all the hours!*

His sun-land has churches, and priests at prayer,  
White nuns, as white as the far north snow;  
They go where danger may bid them go,—  
They dare when the angel of death is there.

His love-land has ladies so fair, so fair,  
In the Creole quarter, with great black eyes,—  
So fair that the Mayor must keep them there  
Lest troubles, like troubles of Troy, arise.

His love-land has ladies, with eyes held down,—  
Held down, because if they lifted them,  
Why, you would be lost in that old French town,  
Though you held even to God's garment hem.

His love-land has ladies so fair, so fair,  
That they bend their eyes to the holy book  
Lest you should forget yourself, your prayer,  
And never more cease to look and to look.

And these are the ladies that no men see,  
And this is the reason men see them not.  
Better their modest sweet mystery,—  
Better by far than the battle-shot.

And so, in this curious old town of tiles,  
The proud French quarter of days long gone,  
In castles of Spain and tumble-down piles  
These wonderful ladies live on and on.

I sit in the church where they come and go;  
I dream of glory that has long since gone,  
Of the low raised high, of the high brought low,  
As in battle-torn days of Napoleon.

These piteous places, so rich, so poor!  
One quaint old church at the edge of the town  
Has white tombs laid to the very church door,—  
White leaves in the story of life turned down.

White leaves in the story of life are these,  
The low white slabs in the long strong grass,  
Where Glory has emptied her hour-glass  
And dreams with the dreamers beneath the trees.

I dream with the dreamers beneath the sod,  
Where souls pass by to the great white throne;  
I count each tomb as a mute milestone  
For weary, sweet souls on their way to God.

I sit all day by the vast, strong stream,  
'Mid low white slabs in the long strong grass  
Where Time has forgotten for aye to pass,  
To dream, and ever to dream and to dream.

This quaint old church with its dead to the door,  
By the cypress swamp at the edge of the town,  
So restful seems that you want to sit down  
And rest you, and rest you for evermore.

And one white tomb is a lowliest tomb,  
That has crept up close to the crumbling door,—  
Some penitent soul, as imploring room

Close under the cross that is leaning o'er.

'Tis a low white slab, and 't is nameless, too—  
Her untold story, why, who should know?  
Yet God, I reckon, can read right through  
That nameless stone to the bosom below.

And the roses know, and they pity her, too;  
They bend their heads in the sun or rain,  
And they read, and they read, and then read again,  
As children reading strange pictures through.

Why, surely her sleep it should be profound;  
For oh the apples of gold above!  
And oh the blossoms of bridal love!  
And oh the roses that gather around!

The sleep of a night, or a thousand morns?  
Why what is the difference here, to-day?  
Sleeping and sleeping the years away  
With all earth's roses, and none of its thorns.

Magnolias white and the roses red—  
The palm-tree here and the cypress there:  
Sit down by the palm at the feet of the dead,  
And hear a penitent's midnight prayer.

## II.

The old churchyard is still as death,  
A stranger passes to and fro  
As if to church—he does not go—  
The dead night does not draw a breath.

A lone sweet lady prays within.  
The stranger passes by the door—  
Will he not pray? Is he so poor  
He has no prayer for his sin?

Is he so poor! His two strong hands  
Are full and heavy, as with gold;  
They clasp, as clasp two iron bands  
About two bags with eager hold.

Will he not pause and enter in,  
Put down his heavy load and rest,  
Put off his garmenting of sin,  
As some black burden from his breast?

Ah, me! the brave alone can pray.  
The church-door is as cannon's mouth  
To sinner North, or sinner South,  
More dreaded than dread battle day.

Now two men pace. They pace apart,  
And one with youth and truth is fair;  
The fervid sun is in his heart,  
The tawny South is in his hair.

Ay, two men pace, pace left and right—  
The lone, sweet lady prays within—  
Ay, two men pace: the silent night

Kneels down in prayer for some sin.

Lo! two men pace; and one is gray,  
A blue-eyed man from snow-clad land,  
With something heavy in each hand,—  
With heavy feet, as feet of clay.

Ay, two men pace; and one is light  
Of step, but still his brow is dark  
His eyes are as a kindled spark  
That burns beneath the brow of night!

And still they pace. The stars are red,  
The tombs are white as frosted snow;  
The silence is as if the dead  
Did pace in couples, to and fro.

### III.

The azure curtain of God's house  
Draws back, and hangs star-pinned to space;  
I hear the low, large moon arouse,  
I see her lift her languid face.

I see her shoulder up the east,  
Low-necked, and large as womanhood,—  
Low-necked, as for some ample feast  
Of gods, within yon orange-wood.

She spreads white palms, she whispers peace,—  
Sweet peace on earth for evermore;  
Sweet peace for two beneath the trees,  
Sweet peace for one within the door.

The bent stream, like a scimitar  
Flashed in the sun, sweeps on and on,  
Till sheathed like some great sword new-drawn  
In seas beneath the Carib's star.

The high moon climbs the sapphire hill,  
The lone sweet lady prays within;  
The crickets keep a clang and din—  
They are so loud, earth is so still!

And two men glare in silence there!  
The bitter, jealous hate of each  
Has grown too deep for deed or speech—  
The lone, sweet lady keeps her prayer.

The vast moon high through heaven's field  
In circling chariot is rolled;  
The golden stars are spun and reeled,  
And woven into cloth of gold.

The white magnolia fills the night  
With perfume, as the proud moon fills  
The glad earth with her ample light  
From out her awful sapphire hills.

White orange blossoms fill the boughs  
Above, about the old church door,—  
They wait the bride, the bridal vows,—

They never hung so fair before.

The two men glare as dark as sin!  
And yet all seems so fair, so white,  
You would not reckon it was night,—  
The while the lady prays within.

#### IV.

She prays so very long and late,—  
The two men, weary, waiting there,—  
The great magnolia at the gate  
Bends drowsily above her prayer.

The cypress in his cloak of moss,  
That watches on in silent gloom,  
Has leaned and shaped a shadow-cross  
Above the nameless, lowly tomb.

What can she pray for? What her sin?  
What folly of a maid so fair?  
What shadows bind the wondrous hair  
Of one who prays so long within?

The palm-trees guard in regiment,  
Stand right and left without the gate;  
The myrtle-moss trees wait and wait;  
The tall magnolia leans intent.

The cypress trees, on gnarled old knees,  
Far out the dank and marshy deep  
Where slimy monsters groan and creep,  
Kneel with her in their marshy seas.

What can her sin be? Who shall know?  
The night flies by,—a bird on wing;  
The men no longer to and fro  
Stride up and down, or anything.

For one so weary and so old  
Has hardly strength to stride or stir;  
He can but hold his bags of gold,—  
But hug his gold and wait for her.

The two stand still,—stand face to face.  
The moon slides on; the midnight air  
Is perfumed as a house of prayer—  
The maiden keeps her holy place.

Two men! And one is gray, but one  
Scarce lifts a full-grown face as yet:  
With light foot on life's threshold set,—  
Is he the other's sun-born son?

And one is of the land of snow,  
And one is of the land of sun;  
A black-eyed burning youth is one,  
But one has pulses cold and slow:

Ay, cold and slow from clime of snow  
Where Nature's bosom, icy bound,  
Holds all her forces, hard, profound,—



Holds close where all the South lets go.

Blame not the sun, blame not the snows;  
God's great schoolhouse for all is clime,  
The great school-teacher, Father Time;  
And each has borne as best he knows.

At last the elder speaks,—he cries,—  
He speaks as if his heart would break;  
He speaks out as a man that dies,—  
As dying for some lost love's sake:

"Come, take this bag of gold, and go!  
Come, take one bag! See, I have two!  
Oh, why stand silent, staring so,  
When I would share my gold with you?"

"Come, take this gold! See how I pray!  
See how I bribe, and beg, and buy,—  
Ay, buy! buy love, as you, too, may  
Some day before you come to die.

"God! take this gold, I beg, I pray!  
I beg as one who thirsting cries  
For but one drop of drink, and dies  
In some lone, loveless desert way.

"You hesitate? Still hesitate?  
Stand silent still and mock my pain?  
Still mock to see me wait and wait,  
And wait her love, as earth waits rain?"

## V.

O broken ship! O starless shore!  
O black and everlasting night,  
Where love comes never any more  
To light man's way with heaven's light.

A godless man with bags of gold  
I think a most unholy sight;  
Ah, who so desolate at night  
Amid death's sleepers still and cold?

A godless man on holy ground  
I think a most unholy sight.  
I hear death trailing like a hound  
Hard after him, and swift to bite.

## VI.

The vast moon settles to the west:  
Two men beside a nameless tomb,  
And one would sit thereon to rest,—  
Ay, rest below, if there were room.

What is this rest of death, sweet friend?  
What is the rising up,—and where?  
I say, death is a lengthened prayer,  
A longer night, a larger end.

Hear you the lesson I once learned:

I died; I sailed a million miles  
Through dreamful, flowery, restful isles,—  
She was not there, and I returned.

I say the shores of death and sleep  
Are one; that when we, wearied, come  
To Lethe's waters, and lie dumb,  
'T is death, not sleep, holds us to keep.

Yea, we lie dead for need of rest  
And so the soul drifts out and o'er  
The vast still waters to the shore  
Beyond, in pleasant, tranquil quest:

It sails straight on, forgetting pain,  
Past isles of peace, to perfect rest,—  
Now were it best abide, or best  
Return and take up life again?

And that is all of death there is,  
Believe me. If you find your love  
In that far land, then like the dove  
Abide, and turn not back to this.

But if you find your love not there;  
Or if your feet feel sure, and you  
Have still allotted work to do,—  
Why, then return to toil and care.

Death is no mystery. 'T is plain  
If death be mystery, then sleep  
Is mystery thrice strangely deep,—  
For oh this coming back again!

Austerest ferryman of souls!  
I see the gleam of solid shores,  
I hear thy steady stroke of oars  
Above the wildest wave that rolls.

O Charon, keep thy sombre ships!  
We come, with neither myrrh nor balm,  
Nor silver piece in open palm,  
But lone white silence on our lips.

## VII.

She prays so long! she prays so late!  
What sin in all this flower-land  
Against her supplicating hand  
Could have in heaven any weight?

Prays she for her sweet self alone?  
Prays she for some one far away,  
Or some one near and dear to-day,  
Or some poor, lorn, lost soul unknown?

It seems to me a selfish thing  
To pray forever for one's self;  
It seems to me like heaping pelf  
In heaven by hard reckoning.

Why, I would rather stoop, and bear

My load of sin, and bear it well  
And bravely down to burning hell,  
Than ever pray one selfish prayer!

### VIII.

78

The swift chameleon in the gloom—  
This silence it is so profound!—  
Forsakes its bough, glides to the ground,  
Then up, and lies across the tomb.

It erst was green as olive-leaf,  
It then grew gray as myrtle moss  
The time it slid the moss across;  
But now 't is marble-white with grief.

The little creature's hues are gone;  
Here in the pale and ghostly light  
It lies so pale, so panting white,—  
White as the tomb it lies upon.

The two men by that nameless tomb,  
And both so still! You might have said  
These two men, they are also dead,  
And only waiting here for room.

How still beneath the orange-bough!  
How tall was one, how bowed was one!  
The one was as a journey done,  
The other as beginning now.

And one was young,—young with that youth  
Eternal that belongs to truth;  
And one was old,—old with the years  
That follow fast on doubts and fears.

79

And yet the habit of command  
Was his, in every stubborn part;  
No common knave was he at heart,  
Nor his the common coward's hand.

He looked the young man in the face,  
So full of hate, so frank of hate;  
The other, standing in his place,  
Stared back as straight and hard as fate.

And now he sudden turned away,  
And now he paced the path, and now  
Came back, beneath the orange-bough  
Pale-browed, with lips as cold as clay.

As mute as shadows on a wall,  
As silent still, as dark as they,  
Before that stranger, bent and gray,  
The youth stood scornful, proud, and tall.

He stood, a tall palmetto-tree  
With Spanish daggers guarding it;  
Nor deed, nor word, to him seemed fit  
While she prayed on so silently.

80

He slew his rival with his eyes;

His eyes were daggers piercing deep,—  
So deep that blood began to creep  
From their deep wounds and drop wordwise:

His eyes so black, so bright that they  
Might raise the dead, the living slay,  
If but the dead, the living, bore  
Such hearts as heroes had of yore:

Two deadly arrows barbed in black,  
And feathered, too, with raven's wing;  
Two arrows that could silent sting,  
And with a death-wound answer back.

How fierce he was! how deadly still  
In that mesmeric, hateful stare  
Turned on the pleading stranger there  
That drew to him, despite his will:

So like a bird down-fluttering,  
Down, down, beneath a snake's bright eyes,  
He stood, a fascinated thing,  
That hopeless, unresisting, dies.

He raised a hard hand as before,  
Reached out the gold, and offered it  
With hand that shook as ague-fit,—  
The while the youth but scorned the more.

"You will not touch it? In God's name  
Who are you, and what are you, then?  
Come, take this gold, and be of men,—  
A human form with human aim.

"Yea, take this gold,—she must be mine  
She shall be mine! I do not fear  
Your scowl, your scorn, your soul austere,  
The living, dead, or your dark sign.

"I saw her as she entered there;  
I saw her, and uncovered stood:  
The perfume of her womanhood  
Was holy incense on the air.

"She left behind sweet sanctity,  
Religion lay the way she went;  
I cried I would repent, repent!  
She passed on, all unheeding me.

"Her soul is young, her eyes are bright  
And gladsome, as mine own are dim;  
But, oh, I felt my senses swim  
The time she passed me by to-night!—

"The time she passed, nor raised her eyes  
To hear me cry I would repent,  
Nor turned her head to hear my cries,  
But swifter went the way she went,—

"Went swift as youth, for all these years!  
And this the strangest thing appears,  
That lady there seems just the same,—  
Sweet Gladys— Ah! you know her name?

“You hear her name and start that I  
Should name her dear name trembling so?  
Why, boy, when I shall come to die  
That name shall be the last I know.

“That name shall be the last sweet name  
My lips shall utter in this life!  
That name is brighter than bright flame,—  
That lady is my wedded wife!

“Ah, start and catch your burning breath!  
Ah, start and clutch your deadly knife!  
If this be death, then be it death,—  
But that loved lady is my wife!

“Yea, you are stunned! your face is white,  
That I should come confronting you,  
As comes a lorn ghost of the night  
From out the past, and to pursue.

“You thought me dead? You shake your head,  
You start back horrified to know  
That she is loved, that she is wed,  
That you have sinned in loving so.

“Yet what seems strange, that lady there,  
Housed in the holy house of prayer,  
Seems just the same for all her tears,—  
For all my absent twenty years.

“Yea, twenty years to-night, to-night,  
Just twenty years this day, this hour,  
Since first I plucked that perfect flower,  
And not one witness of the rite.

“Nay, do not doubt,—I tell you true!  
Her prayers, her tears, her constancy  
Are all for me, are all for me,—  
And not one single thought for you!

“I knew, I knew she would be here  
This night of nights to pray for me!  
And how could I for twenty year  
Know this same night so certainly?

“Ah me! some thoughts that we would drown  
Stick closer than a brother to  
The conscience, and pursue, pursue  
Like baying hound to hunt us down.

“And then, that date is history;  
For on that night this shore was shelled,  
And many a noble mansion felled,  
With many a noble family.

“I wore the blue; I watched the flight  
Of shells like stars tossed through the air  
To blow your hearth-stones—anywhere,  
That wild, illuminated night.

“Nay, rage befits you not so well:  
Why, you were but a babe at best,  
Your cradle some sharp bursted shell

That tore, maybe, your mother's breast!

"Hear me! We came in honored war.  
The risen world was on your track!  
The whole North-land was at our back,  
From Hudson's bank to the North star!

"And from the North to palm-set sea  
The splendid fiery cyclone swept.  
Your fathers fell, your mothers wept,  
Their nude babes clinging to the knee.

"A wide and desolated track:  
Behind, a path of ruin lay;  
Before, some women by the way  
Stood mutely gazing, clad in black.

"From silent women waiting there  
Some tears came down like still small rain;  
Their own sons on the battle plain  
Were now but viewless ghosts of air.

"Their own dear daring boys in gray,—  
They should not see them any more;  
Our cruel drums kept telling o'er  
The time their own sons went away.

"Through burning town, by bursting shell—  
Yea, I remember well that night;  
I led through orange-lanes of light,  
As through some hot outpost of hell!

"That night of rainbow-shot and shell  
Sent from your surging river's breast  
To waken me, no more to rest,—  
That night I should remember well!

"That night amid the maimed and dead,—  
A night in history set down  
By light of many a burning town,  
And written all across in red,—

"Her father dead, her brothers dead,  
Her home in flames,—what else could she  
But fly all helpless here to me,  
A fluttered dove, that night of dread?

"Short time, hot time had I to woo  
Amid the red shells' battle-chime;  
But women rarely reckon time,  
And perils speed their love when true.

"And then I wore a captain's sword;  
And, too, had oftentimes before  
Doffed cap at her dead father's door,  
And passed a soldier's pleasant word.

"And then—ah, I was comely then!  
I bore no load upon my back,  
I heard no hounds upon my track,  
But stood the tallest of tall men.

"Her father's and her mother's shrine,

This church amid the orange wood,  
So near and so secure it stood,  
It seemed to beckon as a sign.

"Its white cross seemed to beckon me:  
My heart was strong, and it was mine  
To throw myself upon my knee,  
To beg to lead her to this shrine.

"She did consent. Through lanes of light  
I led through that church-door that night—  
Let fall your hand! Take back your face  
And stand,—stand patient in your place!

"She loved me; and she loves me still.  
Yea, she clung close to me that hour  
As honey-bee to honey-flower,—  
And still is mine, through good or ill.

"The priest stood there. He spake the prayer;  
He made the holy, mystic sign.  
And she was mine, was wholly mine,—  
Is mine this moment I will swear!

"Then days, then nights, of vast delight,—  
Then came a doubtful, later day;  
The faithful priest, now far away,  
Watched with the dying in the fight:

"The priest amid the dying, dead,  
Kept duty on the battle-field,—  
That midnight marriage unrevealed  
Kept strange thoughts running through my head.

"At last a stray ball struck the priest:  
This vestibule his chancel was.  
And now none lived to speak her cause,  
Record, or champion her the least.

"Hear me! I had been bred to hate  
All priests, their mummeries and all.  
Ah, it was fate,—ah, it was fate  
That all things tempted me to fall!

"And then the rattling songs we sang  
Those nights when rudely revelling,—  
The songs that only soldiers sing,—  
Until the very tent-poles rang!

"What is the rhyme that rhymers say  
Of maidens born to be betrayed  
By epaulettes and shining blade,  
While soldiers love and ride away?

"And then my comrades spake her name  
Half taunting, with a touch of shame;  
Taught me to hold that lily-flower  
As some light pastime of the hour.

"And then the ruin in the land,  
The death, dismay, the lawlessness!  
Men gathered gold on every hand,—  
Heaped gold: and why should I do less?

"The cry for gold was in the air,  
For Creole gold, for precious things;  
The sword kept prodding here and there  
Through bolts and sacred fastenings.

"Get gold! get gold!" This was the cry.  
And I loved gold. What else could I  
Or you, or any earnest one  
Born in this getting age have done?

"With this one lesson taught from youth,  
And ever taught us, to get gold,—  
To get and hold, and ever hold,—  
What else could I have done, forsooth?

"She, seeing how I sought for gold,—  
This girl, my wife, one late night told  
Of treasures hidden close at hand,  
In her dead father's mellow land:

"Of gold she helped her brothers hide  
Beneath a broad banana tree,  
The day the two in battle died,—  
The night she dying fled to me.

"It seemed too good; I laughed to scorn  
Her trustful tale. She answered not;  
But meekly on the morrow morn  
Two massive bags of bright gold brought.

"And when she brought this gold to me,  
Red Creole gold, rich, rare, and old,—  
When I at last had gold, sweet gold,  
I cried in very ecstasy!

"Red gold! rich gold! two bags of gold!  
The two stout bags of gold she brought  
And gave with scarce a second thought,—  
Why, her two hands could hardly hold!

"Now I had gold! two bags of gold!  
Two wings of gold to fly, and fly  
The wide world's girth; red gold to hold  
Against my heart for aye and aye!

"My country's lesson: 'Gold! get gold!'  
I learned it well in land of snow;  
And what can glow, so brightly glow,  
Long winter nights of Northern cold?

"Ay, now at last, at last I had  
The one thing, all fair things above  
My land had taught me most to love!  
A miser now! and I grew mad.

"With those two bags of gold my own,  
I then began to plan that night  
For flight, for far and sudden flight,—  
For flight; and, too, for flight alone.

"I feared! I feared! My heart grew cold,—  
Some one might claim this gold of me!  
I feared her,—feared her purity,



Feared all things but my bags of gold.

"I grew to hate her face, her creed,—  
That face the fairest ever yet  
That bowed o'er holy cross or bead,  
Or yet was in God's image set.

"I fled,—nay, not so knavish low  
As you have fancied, did I fly;  
I sought her at that shrine, and I  
Told her full frankly I should go.

"I stood a giant in my power,—  
And did she question or dispute?  
I stood a savage, selfish brute,—  
She bowed her head, a lily-flower.

"And when I sudden turned to go,  
And told her I should come no more,  
She bowed her head so low, so low,  
Her vast black hair fell pouring o'er.

"And that was all; her splendid face  
Was mantled from me, and her night  
Of hair half hid her from my sight  
As she fell moaning in her place.

"And there, 'mid her dark night of hair,  
She sobbed, low moaning through her tears,  
That she would wait, wait all the years,—  
Would wait and pray in her despair.

"Nay, did not murmur, not deny,—  
She did not cross me one sweet word!  
I turned and fled: I thought I heard  
A night-bird's piercing low death-cry!"

PART II.

*HOW soft this moonlight of the South!  
How sweet my South in soft moonlight!  
I want to kiss her warm sweet mouth  
As she lies sleeping here to-night.*

*How still! I do not hear a mouse.  
I see some bursting buds appear;  
I hear God in His garden,—hear  
Him trim some flowers for His house.*

*I hear some singing stars; the mouth  
Of my vast river sings and sings,  
And pipes on reeds of pleasant things,—  
Of splendid promise for my South:*

*My great South-woman, soon to rise  
And tiptoe up and loose her hair;  
Tiptoe, and take from all the skies  
God's stars and glorious moon to wear!*

96

I.

**T**HE poet shall create or kill,  
Bid heroes live, bid braggarts die.  
I look against a lurid sky,—  
My silent South lies proudly still.

The lurid light of burning lands  
Still climbs to God's house overhead;  
Mute women wring white withered hands;  
Their eyes are red, their skies are red.

Poor man! still boast your bitter wars!  
Still burn and burn, and burning die.  
But God's white finger spins the stars  
In calm dominion of the sky.

And not one ray of light the less  
Comes down to bid the grasses spring;  
No drop of dew nor anything  
Shall fail for all your bitterness.

The land that nursed a nation's youth,  
Ye burned it, sacked it, sapped it dry.  
Ye gave it falsehoods for its truth,  
And fame was fashioned from a lie.

If man grows large, is God the less?  
The moon shall rise and set the same,  
The great sun spill his splendid flame  
And clothe the world in queenliness.

And from that very soil ye trod  
Some large-souled seeing youth shall come  
Some day, and he shall not be dumb  
Before the awful court of God.

97

98

## II.

The weary moon had turned away,  
The far North-Star was turning pale  
To hear the stranger's boastful tale  
Of blood and flame that battle day.

And yet again the two men glared,  
Close face to face above that tomb;  
Each seemed as jealous of the room  
The other eager waiting shared.

Again the man began to say,—  
As taking up some broken thread,  
As talking to the patient dead,—  
The Creole was as still as they:

"That night we burned yon grass-grown town,—  
The grasses, vines are reaching up;  
The ruins they are reaching down,  
As sun-browned soldiers when they sup.

"I knew her,—knew her constancy.  
She said, this night of every year  
She here would come, and kneeling here,  
Would pray the live-long night for me.

"This praying seems a splendid thing!  
It drives old Time the other way;  
It makes him lose all reckoning  
Of years that pagans have to pay.

"This praying seems a splendid thing!  
It makes me stronger as she prays—  
But oh the bitter, bitter days  
When I became a banished thing!

"I fled, took ship,—I fled as far  
As far ships drive tow'rd the North-Star;  
For I did hate the South, the sun  
That made me think what I had done.

"I could not see a fair palm-tree  
In foreign land, in pleasant place,  
But it would whisper of her face  
And shake its keen sharp blades at me.

"Each black-eyed woman would recall  
A lone church-door, a face, a name,  
A coward's flight, a soldier's shame:  
I fled from woman's face, from all.

"I hugged my gold, my precious gold,  
Within my strong, stout, buckskin vest.  
I wore my bags against my breast  
So close I felt my heart grow cold.

"I did not like to see it now;  
I did not spend one single piece.  
I travelled, travelled without cease  
As far as Russian ship could plow.

"And when my own scant hoard was gone,

And I had reached the far North-land,  
I took my two stout bags in hand  
As one pursued, and journeyed on.

“Ah, I was weary! I grew gray;  
I felt the fast years slip and reel  
As slip black beads when maidens kneel  
At altars when out-door is gay.

“At last I fell prone in the road,—  
Fell fainting with my cursèd load.  
A skin-clad cossack helped me bear  
My bags, nor would one shilling share.

“He looked at me with proud disdain,—  
He looked at me as if he knew;  
His black eyes burned me thro’ and thro’;  
His scorn pierced like a deadly pain.

“He frightened me with honesty;  
He made me feel so small, so base,  
I fled, as if the fiend kept chase,—  
The fiend that claims my company!

“I bore my load alone; I crept  
Far up the steep and icy way;  
And there, before a cross there lay  
A barefoot priest, who bowed and wept.

“I threw my gold right down and sped  
Straight on. And oh my heart was light!  
A spring-time bird in spring-time flight  
Flies not so happy as I fled.

“I felt somehow this monk would take  
My gold, my load from off my back;  
Would turn the fiend from off my track,  
Would take my gold for sweet Christ’s sake!

“I fled; I did not look behind;  
I fled, fled with the mountain wind.  
At last; far down the mountain’s base  
I found a pleasant resting-place.

“I rested there so long, so well,  
More grateful than all tongues can tell.  
It was such pleasant thing to hear  
That valley’s voices calm and clear:

“That valley veiled in mountain air,  
With white goats on the hills at morn;  
That valley green with seas of corn,  
With cottage islands here and there.

“I watched the mountain girls. The hay  
They mowed was not more sweet than they;  
They laid brown hands in my white hair;  
They marvelled at my face of care.

“I tried to laugh; I could but weep.  
I made these peasants one request,—  
That I with them might toil or rest,  
And with them sleep the long, last sleep.

"I begged that I might battle there,  
For that fair valley-land, for those  
Who gave me cheer when girt with foes,  
And have a country, loved and fair.

"Where is that spot that poets name  
Our country? name the hallowed land?  
Where is that spot where man must stand  
Or fall when girt with sword and flame?

"Where is that one permitted spot?  
Where is the one place man must fight?  
Where rests the one God-given right  
To fight, as ever patriots fought?

"I say 't is in that holy house  
Where God first set us down on earth:  
Where mother welcomed us at birth,  
And bared her breasts, a happy spouse.

"But when some wrong, some deed of shame,  
Shall make that land no more our own—  
Ah! hunger for that holy name  
My country, I have truly known!

"The simple plough-boy from his field  
Looks forth. He sees God's purple wall  
Encircling him. High over all  
The vast sun wheels his shining shield.

"This King, who makes earth what it is,—  
King David bending to his toil!  
O lord and master of the soil,  
How envied in thy loyal bliss!

"Long live the land we loved in youth,—  
That world with blue skies bent about,  
Where never entered ugly doubt!  
Long live the simple, homely truth!

"Can true hearts love some far snow-land,  
Some bleak Alaska bought with gold?  
God's laws are old as love is old;  
And Home is something near at hand.

"Yea, change yon river's course; estrange  
The seven sweet stars; make hate divide  
The full moon from the flowing tide,—  
But this old truth ye cannot change.

"I begged a land as begging bread;  
I begged of these brave mountaineers  
To share their sorrows, share their tears;  
To weep as they wept, with their dead.

"They did consent. The mountain town  
Was mine to love, and valley lands.  
That night the barefoot monk came down  
And laid my two bags in my hands!

"On! On! And oh the load I bore!  
Why, once I dreamed my soul was lead;  
Dreamed once it was a body dead!

It made my cold, hard bosom sore.

“I dragged that body forth and back—  
O conscience, what a baying hound!  
Nor frozen seas nor frosted ground  
Can throw this bloodhound from his track.

“In farthest Russia I lay down  
A dying man, at last to rest;  
I felt such load upon my breast  
As seamen feel, who sinking drown.

“That night, all chill and desperate,  
I sprang up, for I could not rest;  
I tore the two bags from my breast,  
And dashed them in the burning grate.

“I then crept back into my bed;  
I tried, I begged, I prayed to sleep;  
But those red, restless coins would keep  
Slow dropping, dropping, and blood red.

“I heard them clink and clink and clink,—  
They turned, they talked within that grate.  
They talked of her; they made me think  
Of one who still must pray and wait.

“And when the bags burned crisp and black,  
Two coins did start, roll to the floor,—  
Roll out, roll on, and then roll back,  
As if they needs must journey more.

“Ah, then I knew nor change nor space,  
Nor all the drowning years that rolled  
Could hide from me her haunting face,  
Nor still that red-tongued talking gold.

“Again I sprang forth from my bed!  
I shook as in an ague fit;  
I clutched that red gold, burning red,  
I clutched, as if to strangle it.

“I clutched it up—you hear me, boy?—  
I clutched it up with joyful tears!  
I clutched it close, with such wild joy  
I had not felt for years and years!

“Such joy! for I should now retrace  
My steps, should see my land, her face;  
Bring back her gold this battle day,  
And see her, see her, hear her pray!

“I brought it back—you hear me, boy?—  
I clutch it, hold it, hold it now:  
Red gold, bright gold that giveth joy  
To all, and anywhere or how;

“That giveth joy to all but me,—  
To all but me, yet soon to all.  
It burns my hands, it burns! but she  
Shall ope my hands and let it fall.

“For oh I have a willing hand

To give these bags of gold; to see  
Her smile as once she smiled on me  
Here in this pleasant, warm palm-land!"

He ceased, he thrust each hard-clenched fist,  
He threw his gold hard forth again,  
As one impelled by some mad pain  
He would not or could not resist.

The creole, scorning, turned away,  
As if he turned from that lost thief,—  
The one that died without belief  
That awful crucifixion day.

109

### III.

Believe in man, nor turn away.  
Lo! man advances year by year;  
Time bears him upward, and his sphere  
Of life must broaden day by day.

Believe in man with large belief;  
The garnered grain each harvest-time  
Hath promise, roundness, and full prime  
For all the empty chaff and sheaf.

Believe in man with proud belief:  
Truth keeps the bottom of her well,  
And when the thief peeps down, the thief  
Peeps back at him, perpetual.

Faint not that this or that man fell;  
For one that falls a thousand rise  
To lift white Progress to the skies:  
Truth keeps the bottom of her well.

110

Fear not for man, nor cease to delve  
For cool sweet truth, with large belief.  
Lo! Christ himself chose only twelve,  
Yet one of these turned out a thief.

### IV.

Down through the dark magnolia leaves  
Where climbs the rose of Cherokee  
Against the orange-blossomed tree,  
A loom of moonlight weaves and weaves,—

A loom of moonlight, weaving clothes  
From snow-white rose of Cherokee,  
And bridal blooms of orange-tree,  
For fairy folk in fragrant rose.

Down through the mournful myrtle crape,  
Through moving moss, through ghostly gloom,  
A long white moonbeam takes a shape  
Above a nameless, lowly tomb;

111

A long white finger through the gloom  
Of grasses gathered round about,—  
As God's white finger pointing out

A name upon that nameless tomb.

## V.

Her white face bowed in her black hair,  
The maiden prays so still within  
That you might hear a falling pin,—  
Ay, hear her white unuttered prayer.

The moon has grown disconsolate,  
Has turned her down her walk of stars:  
Why, she is shutting up her bars,  
As maidens shut a lover's gate.

The moon has grown disconsolate;  
She will no longer watch and wait.  
But two men wait; and two men will  
Wait on till morning, mute and still:

112

Still wait and walk among the trees,  
Quite careless if the moon may keep  
Her walk along her starry steep  
Above the Southern pearl-sown seas.

They know no moon, or set or rise  
Of stars, or anything to light  
The earth or skies, save her dark eyes,  
This praying, waking, watching night.

They move among the tombs apart,  
Their eyes turn ever to that door;  
They know the worn walks there by heart—  
They turn and walk them o'er and o'er.

They are not wide, these little walks  
For dead folk by this crescent town.  
They lie right close when they lie down,  
As if they kept up quiet talks.

## VI.

113

The two men keep their paths apart;  
But more and more begins to stoop  
The man with gold, as droop and droop  
Tall plants with something at their heart.

Now once again with eager zest  
He offers gold with silent speech;  
The other will not walk in reach,  
But walks around, as round a pest.

His dark eyes sweep the scene around,  
His young face drinks the fragrant air,  
His dark eyes journey everywhere,—  
The other's cleave unto the ground.

It is a weary walk for him,  
For oh he bears a weary load!  
He does not like that narrow road  
Between the dead—it is so dim:

It is so dark, that narrow place,



Where graves lie thick, like yellow leaves:  
Give us the light of Christ and grace,  
Give light to garner in the sheaves.

114

Give light of love; for gold is cold,  
And gold is cruel as a crime;  
It gives no light at such sad time  
As when man's feet wax weak and old.

Ay, gold is heavy, hard, and cold!  
And have I said this thing before?  
Well, I will tell it o'er and o'er,  
'T were need be told ten thousand fold.

"Give us this day our daily bread,"—  
Get this of God, then all the rest  
Is housed in thine own honest breast,  
If you but lift a lordly head.

## VII.

Oh, I have seen men, tall and fair,  
Stoop down their manhood with disgust,  
Stoop down God's image to the dust,  
To get a load of gold to bear;

Have seen men selling day by day  
The glance of manhood that God gave:  
To sell God's image as a slave  
Might sell some little pot of clay!

115

Behold! here in this green graveyard  
A man with gold enough to fill  
A coffin, as a miller's till;  
And yet his path is hard, so hard!

His feet keep sinking in the sand,  
And now so near an opened grave!  
He seems to hear the solemn wave  
Of dread oblivion at hand.

The sands, they grumble so, it seems  
As if he walks some shelving brink.  
He tries to stop, he tries to think,  
He tries to make believe he dreams:

Why, he is free to leave the land,  
The silver moon is white as dawn;  
Why, he has gold in either hand,  
Has silver ways to walk upon.

And who should chide, or bid him stay?  
Or taunt, or threat, or bid him fly?  
The world's for sale, I hear men say,  
And yet this man has gold to buy.

116

Buy what? Buy rest? He could not rest!  
Buy gentle sleep? He could not sleep,  
Though all these graves were wide and deep  
As their wide mouths with the request.

Buy Love, buy faith, buy snow-white truth?

Buy moonlight, sunlight, present, past?  
Buy but one brimful cup of youth  
That calm souls drink of to the last?

O God! 't is pitiful to see  
This miser so forlorn and old!  
O God! how poor a man may be  
With nothing in this world but gold!

### VIII.

The broad magnolia's blooms are white;  
Her blooms are large, as if the moon  
Had lost her way some lazy night,  
And lodged here till the afternoon.

Oh, vast white blossoms breathing love!  
White bosom of my lady dead,  
In your white heaven overhead  
I look, and learn to look above.

117

### IX.

All night the tall magnolia kept  
Kind watch above the nameless tomb:  
Two shapes kept waiting in the gloom  
And gray of morn, where roses wept.

The dew-wet roses wept; their eyes  
All dew, their breath as sweet as prayer.  
And as they wept, the dead down there  
Did feel their tears and hear their sighs.

The grass uprose as if afraid  
Some stranger foot might press too near;  
Its every blade was like a spear,  
Its every spear a living blade.

The grass above that nameless tomb  
Stood all arrayed, as if afraid  
Some weary pilgrim seeking room  
And rest, might lay where she was laid.

### X.

'T was morn, and yet it was not morn;  
'T was morn in heaven, not on earth,—  
A star was singing of a birth,  
Just saying that a day was born.

The marsh hard by that bound the lake,—  
The great low sea-lake, Ponchartrain,  
Shut off from sultry Cuban main,—  
Drew up its legs, as half awake:

Drew long stork legs, long legs that steep  
In slime where alligators creep,—  
Drew long green legs that stir the grass,  
As when the late lorn night-winds pass.

Then from the marsh came croakings low,

118

Then louder croaked some sea-marsh beast;  
Then, far away against the east,  
God's rose of morn began to grow.

From out the marsh, against that east,  
A ghostly moss-swept cypress stood;  
With ragged arms above the wood  
It rose, a God-forsaken beast.

It seemed so frightened where it rose!  
The moss-hung thing it seemed to wave  
The worn-out garments of the grave,—  
To wave and wave its old grave-clothes.

Close by, a cow rose up and lowed  
From out a palm-thatched milking-shed.  
A black boy on the river road  
Fled sudden, as the night had fled:

A nude black boy, a bit of night  
That had been broken off and lost  
From flying night, the time it crossed  
The surging river in its flight:

A bit of darkness, following  
The sable night on sable wing,—  
A bit of darkness stilled with fear,  
Because that nameless tomb was near.

Then holy bells came pealing out;  
Then steamboats blew, then horses neighed;  
Then smoke from hamlets round about  
Crept out, as if no more afraid.

Then shrill cocks here, and shrill cocks there,  
Stretched glossy necks and filled the air.  
How many cocks it takes to make  
A country morning well awake!

Then many boughs, with many birds,—  
Young boughs in green, old boughs in gray,—  
These birds had very much to say  
In their soft, sweet, familiar words.

And all seemed sudden glad; the gloom  
Forgot the church, forgot the tomb;  
And yet like monks with cross and bead  
The myrtles leaned to read and read.

And oh the fragrance of the sod!  
And oh the perfume of the air!  
The sweetness, sweetness everywhere,  
That rose like incense up to God!

I like a cow's breath in sweet spring,  
I like the breath of babes new-born;  
A maid's breath is a pleasant thing,—  
But oh the breath of sudden morn!

Of sudden morn, when every pore  
Of mother earth is pulsing fast  
With life, and life seems spilling o'er  
With love, with love too sweet to last:

Of sudden morn beneath the sun,  
By God's great river wrapped in gray,  
That for a space forgets to run,  
And hides his face as if to pray.

## XI.

The black-eyed Creole kept his eyes  
Turned to the door, as eyes might turn  
To see the holy embers burn  
Some sin away at sacrifice.

Full dawn! but yet he knew no dawn,  
Nor song of bird, nor bird on wing,  
Nor breath of rose, nor anything  
Her fair face lifted not upon.

And yet he taller stood with morn;  
His bright eyes, brighter than before,  
Burned fast against that fastened door,  
His proud lips lifting up with scorn,—

With lofty, silent scorn for one  
Who all night long had plead and plead,  
With none to witness but the dead  
How he for gold must be undone.

Oh, ye who feed a greed for gold,  
And barter truth, and trade sweet youth  
For cold hard gold, behold, behold!  
Behold this man! behold this truth!

Why, what is there in all God's plan  
Of vast creation, high or low,  
By sea or land, by sun or snow,  
So mean, so miserly as man?

Lo, earth and heaven all let go  
Their garnered riches, year by year!  
The treasures of the trackless snow,  
Ah, hast thou seen how very dear?

The wide earth gives, gives golden grain,  
Gives fruits of gold, gives all, gives all!  
Hold forth your hand, and these shall fall  
In your full palm as free as rain.

Yea, earth is generous. The trees  
Strip nude as birth-time without fear,  
And their reward is year by year  
To feel their fulness but increase.

The law of Nature is to give,  
To give, to give! and to rejoice  
In giving with a generous voice,  
And so trust God and truly live.

But see this miser at the last,—  
This man who loves, grasps hold of gold,  
Who grasps it with such eager hold,  
To hold forever hard and fast:

As if to hold what God lets go;  
 As if to hold, while all around  
 Lets go, and drops upon the ground  
 All things as generous as snow.

Let go your greedy hold, I say!  
 Let go your hold! Do not refuse  
 'Till death comes by and shakes you loose,  
 And sends you shamed upon your way.

What if the sun should keep his gold?  
 The rich moon lock her silver up?  
 What if the gold-clad buttercup  
 Became a miser, mean and old?

Ah, me! the coffins are so true  
 In all accounts, the shrouds so thin,  
 That down there you might sew and sew,  
 Nor ever sew one pocket in.

And all that you can hold of lands  
 Down there, below the grass, down there,  
 Will only be that little share  
 You hold in your two dust-full hands.

## **XII.**

She comes! she comes! The stony floor  
 Speaks out! And now the rusty door  
 At last has just one word this day,  
 With mute religious lips, to say.

She comes! she comes! And lo, her face  
 Is upward, radiant, fair as prayer!  
 So pure here in this holy place,  
 Where holy peace is everywhere.

Her upraised face, her face of light  
 And loveliness, from duty done,  
 Is like a rising orient sun  
 That pushes back the brow of night.

How brave, how beautiful is truth!  
 Good deeds untold are like to this.  
 But fairest of all fair things is  
 A pious maiden in her youth:

A pious maiden as she stands  
 Just on the threshold of the years  
 That throb and pulse with hopes and fears,  
 And reaches God her helpless hands.

How fair is she! How fond is she!  
 Her foot upon the threshold there.  
 Her breath is as a blossomed tree,—  
 This maiden mantled in her hair!

Her hair, her black, abundant hair,  
 Where night, inhabited all night  
 And all this day, will not take flight,  
 But finds content and houses there.

Her hands are clasped, her two small hands;  
They hold the holy book of prayer  
Just as she steps the threshold there,  
Clasped downward where she silent stands.

### XIII.

Once more she lifts her lowly face,  
And slowly lifts her large, dark eyes  
Of wonder; and in still surprise  
She looks full forward in her place.

She looks full forward on the air  
Above the tomb, and yet below  
The fruits of gold, the blooms of snow,  
As looking—looking anywhere.

She feels—she knows not what she feels;  
It is not terror, is not fear,  
But there is something that reveals  
A presence that is near and dear.

127

She does not let her eyes fall down,  
They lift against the far profound:  
Against the blue above the town  
Two wide-winged vultures circle round.

Two brown birds swim above the sea,—  
Her large eyes swim as dreamily  
And follow far, and follow high,  
Two circling black specks in the sky.

One forward step,—the closing door  
Creaks out, as frightened or in pain;  
Her eyes are on the ground again—  
Two men are standing close before.

“My love,” sighs one, “my life, my all!”  
Her lifted foot across the sill  
Sinks down,—and all things are so still  
You hear the orange blossoms fall.

But fear comes not where duty is,  
And purity is peace and rest;  
Her cross is close upon her breast,  
Her two hands clasp hard hold of this.

128

Her two hands clasp cross, book, and she  
Is strong in tranquil purity,—  
Ay, strong as Samson when he laid  
His two hands forth, and bowed and prayed.

One at her left, one at her right,  
And she between, the steps upon,—  
I can but see that Syrian night,  
The women there at early dawn

’T is strange, I know, and may be wrong,  
But ever pictured in my song;  
And rhyming on, I see the day  
They came to roll the stone away.

#### XIV.

The sky is like an opal sea,  
The air is like the breath of kine,  
But oh her face is white, and she  
Leans faint to see a lifted sign,—

To see two hands lift up and wave  
To see a face so white with woe,  
So ghastly, hollow, white as though  
It had that moment left the grave.

Her sweet face at that ghostly sign,  
Her fair face in her weight of hair,  
Is like a white dove drowning there,—  
A white dove drowned in Tuscan wine.

He tries to stand, to stand erect.  
'T is gold, 't is gold that holds him down!  
And soul and body both must drown,—  
Two millstones tied about his neck.

Now once again his piteous face  
Is raised to her face reaching there.  
He prays such piteous, silent prayer  
As prays a dying man for grace.

It is not good to see him strain  
To lift his hands, to gasp, to try  
To speak. His parched lips are so dry  
Their sight is as a living pain.

I think that rich man down in hell  
Some like this old man with his gold,—  
To gasp and gasp perpetual  
Like to this minute I have told.

#### XV.

At last the miser cries his pain,—  
A shrill, wild cry, as if a grave  
Just ope'd its stony lips and gave  
One sentence forth, then closed again.

"'T was twenty years last night, last night!"  
His lips still moved, but not to speak;  
His outstretched hands so trembling weak  
Were beggar's hands in sorry plight.

His face upturned to hers, his lips  
Kept talking on, but gave no sound;  
His feet were cloven to the ground;  
Like iron hooks his finger-tips.

"Ay, twenty years," she sadly sighed:  
"I promised mother every year  
That I would pray for father here,  
As she had prayed, the night she died:

"To pray as she prayed, fervidly;  
As she had promised she would pray  
The sad night of her marriage day,

For him, wherever he might be.”

Then she was still; then sudden she  
Let fall her eyes, and so outspake  
As if her very heart would break,  
Her proud lips trembling piteously:

“And whether he come soon or late  
To kneel beside this nameless grave,  
May God forgive my father’s hate  
As I forgive, as she forgave!”

He saw the stone; he understood  
With that quick knowledge that will come  
Most quick when men are made most dumb  
With terror that stops still the blood.

And then a blindness slowly fell  
On soul and body; but his hands  
Held tight his bags, two iron bands,  
As if to bear them into hell.

He sank upon the nameless stone  
With oh such sad, such piteous moan  
As never man might seek to know  
From man’s most unforgiving foe.

He sighed at last, so long, so deep,  
As one heart breaking in one’s sleep,—  
One long, last, weary, willing sigh,  
As if it were a grace to die.

And then his hands, like loosened bands,  
Hung down, hung down on either side;  
His hands hung down and opened wide:  
He rested in the orange lands.



## **Transcriber's Note.**

The following emendations have been made to the text:

["You will not touch it? In God's name](#) *for*

'You will not touch it? In God's name

["That night of rainbow-shot and shell](#) *for*

That night of rainbow-shot and shell

["That night amid the maimed and dead,—](#) *for*

That night amid the maimed and dead,—

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SONGS OF THE  
MEXICAN SEAS \*\*\*

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

# THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at [www.gutenberg.org/license](http://www.gutenberg.org/license).

## **Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works**

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or

distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase "Project Gutenberg" associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website ([www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org)), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary

Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

## **Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™**

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org).

## **Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation**

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at [www.gutenberg.org/contact](http://www.gutenberg.org/contact)

## **Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation**

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many

fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit [www.gutenberg.org/donate](http://www.gutenberg.org/donate).

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: [www.gutenberg.org/donate](http://www.gutenberg.org/donate)

## **Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works**

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org).

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.